

STATEMENT OF SENATOR SLADE GORTON
CHAIRMAN, AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING
ON THE YEAR 2000 PROBLEM
APRIL 28, 1998

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to commend you for holding this hearing. The Year 2000 problem will be one of the most critical issues facing the country over the next 20 months. It has the potential to impact virtually every individual and business in our country.

As you know, during a hearing last February, the Aviation Subcommittee began examining the Year 2000 problem as it relates to the air traffic control system. While we learned that the FAA has been making some progress in this area, it is painfully evident that much work remains. I fear that this is the case for most of the government, as well as the private sector.

Allocating the resources to address this problem will be difficult for government and business alike. Ultimately, Congress has little choice but to pay for whatever fixes are needed. Of course, the budget is tight. I'm looking for a clear picture on the costs for Year 2000 fixes, and when the fixes will be completed.

Even if Congress could provide unlimited funds to federal Year 2000 efforts, there is still only a limited amount of time in which to work. One of the few things Congress cannot do is turn back the clock. Time is now as much an obstacle as any other to resolving this problem.

It is imperative that the government and businesses make the most out of limited time and resources. Ensuring that this happens will be a top priority for me during the next year and a half.

Our society and economy are so interconnected that failure to address the Year 2000 problem in one area may have an adverse impact elsewhere.

It is troubling to realize that no matter how hard a single government agency or business may prepare for this looming threat, serious harm could still result from the poor planning of others.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel of witnesses on their suggestions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.